CHAPTER FIVE

Subtle Prejudice for Modern Times

In 1936, President Roosevelt selected Marshall Shepard, a black clergyman from Mount Olivet Tabernacle Baptist Church in Philadelphia and a member of the Pennsylvania legislature, to deliver the invocation at the Democratic National Convention. When Shepard reached the podium, Senator Smith of South Carolina rose from his seat and bolted from the hall, declaring as he went that, "By God, he's black as melted midnight. Get outa my way. This mongrel meeting ain't no place for a white man." Later Smith explained his protest by saying that he was "not opposed to any Negro praying for me, but [he didn't] want any blue-gummed, slewfooted Senegambian praying for [him] politically!" Smith refused to lend his support to a Democratic party that, as he put it, "caters to [the Negro] as a political and social equal."[1]

Senator Smith's remarks, once thoroughly representative of a particular time and place, are unimaginable today. Politicians and officials simply no longer say such things. Nor, for the most part, do ordinary citizens. Whites' views on racial matters have undergone a sweeping change over the past half-century, quite unlike any other in the annals of public opinion research. Most white Americans now say that blacks and whites should attend school together, that blacks should have an equal chance to compete for jobs, that segregation of buses and restaurants is wrong, that blacks have a right to live wherever they wish. On matters of principle, whites have become dramatically more egalitarian.[2]

Against these unmistakable signs of progress, however, are clear indications of continuing racial discord. While most white Americans believe that prejudice and discrimination are problems of the past, black Americans see prejudice and discrimination everywhere.[3] And although whites' support for the principles of racial equality and integration has increased majestically over the last four decades, their backing for policies designed to bring equality and integration about has increased scarcely at all. Indeed, in some cases, white support has actually declined. Today, as we know from Chapter 2, large numbers of whites believe that the federal government is too generous with blacks, that school desegregation and equal employment opportunity are not the government's business, and that affirmative action programs for blacks should be abandoned.

By themselves, such opinions should not be taken as evidence of racial

malice. To be opposed to affirmative action and simultaneously sympathetic to blacks is not schizophrenic: rejection of affirmative action may be rooted in considerations that have nothing to do with race. Whites might be convinced that affirmative action programs violate principles they care deeply about: that individuals should advance or fall back entirely on the basis of their own talents and efforts, say, or that government should keep out of matters that are essentially private. We will take such possibilities seriously as analysts, just as many white Americans may take them seriously as citizens.

At the same time, we must also consider the possibility that behind white opposition to school desegregation or affirmative action lurk considerations that have everything to do with race. Many white Americans may resist changes in the racial status quo not out of principle but out of prejudice. Such prejudice, if it exists, must take a different form from the unvarnished racism expressed by Senator Smith a generation or two ago. The purpose of this chapter is to offer a conception of subtle prejudice for modern times and to ascertain its role in contemporary white opinion.

Distant Origins

The origins of race prejudice in America can be traced back at least to the middle of the sixteenth century, when English voyagers began to encounter the people of West Africa. At this fateful moment, "one of the fairest-skinned nations suddenly came face to face with one of the darkest peoples on earth."[4] Much more than color set the African apart from the English, of course. In the reports they carried back home, the English explorers portrayed the African as utterly different from themselves: as lecherous, apelike, radically defective in religion, and thoroughly uncivilized. Africans were, by one such account, "a people of beastly living, without a God, law, religion, or common wealth."[5] According to Winthrop Jordan, the perception of profound difference provided "the mental margin absolutely requisite for placing the European on the deck of the slave ship and the Negro in the hold."[6]

Whether Jordan was correct, chattel slavery was well established in the English colonies by 1700, justified on the ground that the African was fit for slavery and for slavery alone. The justification was racist, of course, but it was not until slavery came under direct attack by the abolitionists in the early decades of the nineteenth century that the presumption of black inferiority developed into a full-blown theory of racism.[7] Prior to the abolitionist challenge, slaveholders could defend their practice merely by referring to the fact that slavery was a legally sanctioned economic arrangement. They did not need to make the argument that blacks were inferior; that was simply taken for granted.[8]

But when Northern abolitionists charged that slavery was evil, Southern

slaveholders rose to the challenge. They began to argue that slaveholding was a just and virtuous institution, and that Negroes were "destined by providence" for slavery.[9] They portrayed the African homeland as barbarous, "the scene of unmitigated savagery, cannibalism, devil worship, and licentiousness." They embraced and popularized scientific research that claimed to prove the inferiority of the African race. They introduced "miscegenation" into the American vocabulary, arguing that the abolition of slavery would lead to intermarriage and the mongrelization of the white race. And they emphasized the squalid condition of the freed black in the North: the "vice and pauperism," the "deafness, insanity, and idiocy," that Calhoun and others took as authoritative evidence of blacks' unfitness for freedom. All these arguments in defense of slavery transformed what had been an unthinking assumption of racial superiority into a self-conscious theory of racism.[10]

Slavery and the debate it touched off certainly helped to fortify race prejudice. And yet, when slavery was abolished, prejudice lived on. Discrimination, segregation, and prejudice continued to flourish—and not only in the South. In the view of Leon Litwak, "Discrimination against the Negro and a firmly held belief in the superiority of the white race . . . were shared by an overwhelming majority of white Americans in both the North and the South. Abraham Lincoln, in his vigorous support of both white supremacy and denial of equal rights for Negroes, simply gave expression to almost universal American convictions."[11] As momentous a transformation as it was, emancipation did not mean the eradication of prejudice.

Race prejudice survived slavery's disappearance no doubt for more than one reason, but not least was the persistence of pervasive racism among American elites. Until quite recently, prejudice was an eminently respectable idea in respectable circles. Well into the twentieth century, American institutions of all sorts, including universities, participated in legitimizing the idea of black inferiority. As late as 1921, President Harding felt free to justify his opposition to "racial amalgamation" on grounds of the "fundamental, eternal, and inescapable differences" that he believed placed whites above blacks.[12]

By emphasizing that American race prejudice has a long and durable history, we do not mean to imply that it is somehow permanent and immutable. It is not. Racial prejudice today is not what it once was; its public expression and private language are different now from what they were in the days of slavery.[13] Prejudice is not some fixed and universal prescription. Rather, like other social doctrines, it is altered by turns in intellectual currents, changes in economic arrangements, and eruptions of political crisis. Prejudice, we believe, has been transformed twice in this fashion during our own century alone: first was the

decline of biological racism in scientific and popular discourse on race, which took place in the first decades of the twentieth century; second and more complex was the change set in motion by the struggle for civil rights in the middle of the century and brought to completion by the epidemic of racial violence that raced through scores of American cities in the late 1960s. We sketch these two changes next. If we want to understand the terminology and logic of racial prejudice today, we must be reminded of the forms it took in the imaginable past.[14]

The Decline — Not Demise — of Biological Racism

The doctrine of biological racism began as a rationale first for slavery itself and later for postemancipation forms of racial oppression. At its center is the contention that blacks are an inherently and permanently inferior race. During the nineteenth century, biological racism was refined and enriched by various intellectual trends and political causes, most notably by the triumph of social Darwinism. These various developments were mainly slight variations on a constant theme, however. Into the twentieth century, the idea persisted that blacks were inferior to whites in intelligence and character, and that such inferiorities were inherent and permanent, a reflection of inborn differences.

In a shift that Fredrickson calls "the most fundamental change that occurred in white racial thinking after the First World War," biological racism was challenged and eventually replaced by liberal environmentalism.[15] Racial environmentalists insisted that blacks and whites did not differ in any essential way; that the observed differences between blacks and whites in economic standing or artistic achievement were due to differences in environmental conditions, not genetic predispositions. Liberal environmentalists thereby challenged the conventional understanding that blacks were a permanently alien element of the American population. Remove the socially created obstacles that stood in their way, so went the argument, and blacks would take their rightful and equal place in society.

The ascendance of liberal environmentalism reflects first and foremost a tidal change in American intellectual currents, detectable in a variety of places. For one, in the social and biological sciences, the idea of separate and distinct races came under relentless attack, which weakened the popular contention that the "white race" had developed further along the path of evolution.[16] At the same time, studies began to show that differences between blacks and whites in mortality and illness could be reduced or eliminated altogether when variations in housing, nutrition, sanitation, and medical care were taken into account. As a consequence, the argument that blacks were an inferior race,

"doomed to spin their brutish existence downward into extinction," relinquished some of its force.[17] Meanwhile, scores of anthropological studies were celebrating the contributions made by African and Asian societies, and were revealing huge differences in temperament and personality due, evidently, to culture. Investigations by Mead and Benedict, among others, argued that human behavior was molded less by genes and more by tradition and custom.[18] And at home came the artistic flowering of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s. The conspicuous achievements of Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, Marian Anderson, Paul Robeson, Louis Armstrong, and others made it more difficult to maintain that blacks were inherently disqualified from distinguished contributions to American life.

Perhaps most striking in this broad shift from biology to culture was the revolution in the scientific study of intelligence. The superiority of the "Nordic" type was the standard early result in studies of intelligence, based on the measurement of cranial capacity in the nineteenth century and IQ in the early stages of the twentieth. But then came a series of embarrassing demonstrations that differences between racial groups in intellectual performance could be traced to differences in cultural or environmental factors. Authoritative conclusions of Nordic superiority and Negro inferiority were retracted; inquiries into the genetic foundations for racial differences in intelligence quietly disappeared.[19]

All in all, a remarkable transformation had taken place. At the turn of the century, the social scientific investigation of race was preoccupied with the pathologies of Negro life, interpreting such pathologies as evidence of the inferiority and alien nature of the Negro, condemned by heredity to a permanent low station. Two or three decades later, racial inequalities were taken as evidence of pervasive prejudice and discrimination. Under the new intellectual regime, the Negro "problem" was situated in the hearts and minds of white citizens and in the discriminatory practices of white society.

By the Second World War, liberal environmentalism had taken over American social science. We presume that its entrenchment was a reflection of a more general turn toward egalitarianism among American elites, and that the liberal environmentalists positioned in America's most prestigious universities contributed directly to a more racially egalitarian public discourse.[20] Following the war, their cause was perhaps advanced by "revulsion against the racism of the Nazis" and by American leaders' embarrassment over flagrant incidents of racial discrimination at home that undermined efforts to compete with the Soviet Union for the loyalty of the peoples of Asia and Africa.[21] Public discussions of race came to be dominated by the assumptions of liberal environmentalism, and this continues to be true, for the most part, today.

The virtual disappearance of biological racism from elite circles leaves open the question of whether it also diminished in the minds of average citizens. The answer here appears to be yes, though the evidence is fragmentary. One bit comes from a series of careful studies undertaken by Apostle and his colleagues in the early 1970s, set in the San Francisco Bay Area and recounted in *The Anatomy of Racial Attitudes*. In this research, Americans were questioned about the differences they saw between blacks and whites and, most relevant to our point here, about how they explained the differences they saw. It turns out that relatively few whites attributed racial inequalities to inborn differences: to differences in intellectual capacity, differences "in the genes," in the "makeup" of blacks and whites, to differences "in the blood." Roughly 6% of Bay Area whites were in possession of a pure version of a genetic account for racial differences, and another 16% or so incorporated such thinking partially. Biological racism was relatively unpopular, therefore, and it was least popular among younger and better-educated whites, suggesting that it might be fading away altogether.[22]

Other evidence supports this conclusion more directly. In both the 1972 and 1986 NES surveys, white Americans were asked to consider whether they thought blacks came from a less-able race. In 1972, 31% of white Americans subscribed to the view that blacks were disabled by virtue of their biological inheritance; by 1986, the percentage had fallen to 14%.[23]

Another and final example pertains to the allegation of racial differences in intelligence. Beginning with a national survey carried out by NORC in 1942, white Americans have been asked periodically whether they think blacks and whites are equal in native intelligence. In 1942, fewer than half of the whites interviewed (47%) agreed that blacks were the intellectual equal of whites; by 1956, 80% did so. This is a remarkable increase in so short a time, offering further testimony to the declining fortunes of biological racism.[24]

From several quarters, then, it seems reasonable to conclude that racial thinking underwent an important change in twentieth-century America, and not only among white elites but also within the white public generally. The notion of genetic difference, of permanent disadvantage, is now less prominent than it once was. The biological argument has not disappeared altogether, but it has diminished. Racial prejudice no longer hangs on the contention that blacks are an inferior race, incapacitated from the outset by their biological inheritance.

The decline of biological racism must not be equated with the decline of racism generally. That most white Americans no longer subscribe to the view that blacks are crippled by inferior genetic endowment is a sign of real progress,

but it does not mean that white Americans are now color-blind. As biological racism has declined, a new form of racial prejudice has appeared, shaped by the racial crisis of the middle part of the century.

From Civil Disobedience to Urban Violence: Transformations in the Black Image during the King Years

The assault on segregation that began in the middle of the twentieth century eventually brought a social, economic, and political transformation to the South and to the nation. In courtrooms, blacks pressed claims on an increasingly sympathetic federal judiciary. In the streets—or more precisely, on buses and streetcars, and at lunch counters and department stores—blacks challenged the statutes and customs designed to keep them in their place. And in the halls of Congress, the civil rights movement finally succeeded in securing passage of landmark legislation that made discrimination illegal. Blacks' demands for equal rights triggered a massive and violent resistance in the Deep South, provoked a white backlash in the nation as a whole, and set in motion a racial reorientation in American party politics. This tumultuous time was capped by the outbreak of armed conflict and civil disorder in scores of American cities and, in the spring of 1968, by the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Nothing like this had taken place since the debate over slavery and the Civil War more than 100 years before. What did white Americans see during this tempestuous period and, more important, what lessons were they likely to draw about black Americans as a consequence?[25]

The first public stirrings of the modern civil rights movement took place in the 1950s in a series of protests and boycotts, first in Baton Rouge, then in Montgomery, Tallahassee, and Birmingham. The most famous of these was the Montgomery bus boycott, characterized by Aldon Morris as "the watershed of the modern civil rights movement," not least because it launched the political career of Martin Luther King, Jr., recently arrived from Atlanta to assume the post of pastor for the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church.[26] The historic significance of Montgomery is beyond dispute, but from the perspective of white America at the time, the commotion in Montgomery was not all that visible, little more than a premonition.

In the meantime, the 1954 Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation in the public schools was provoking a panic in the South. By 1957, according to C. Vann Woodward,

> a fever of rebellion and a malaise of fear spread over the region. Books were banned, libraries were purged, newspapers were slanted, magazines disappeared from the stands, television programs were withheld, films were excluded. Teachers, preachers, and college professors were questioned, harassed, and many were driven from their positions or fled the South. The N.A.A.C.P. was virtually driven underground in some states. Words began to shift and lose their common meaning. A "moderate" became a man who dared to open his mouth, an "extremist" one who favored eventual compliance with the law, and "compliance" took on the connotations of treason. Politicians who had once spoken for moderation began to vie with each other in defiance of government.[27]

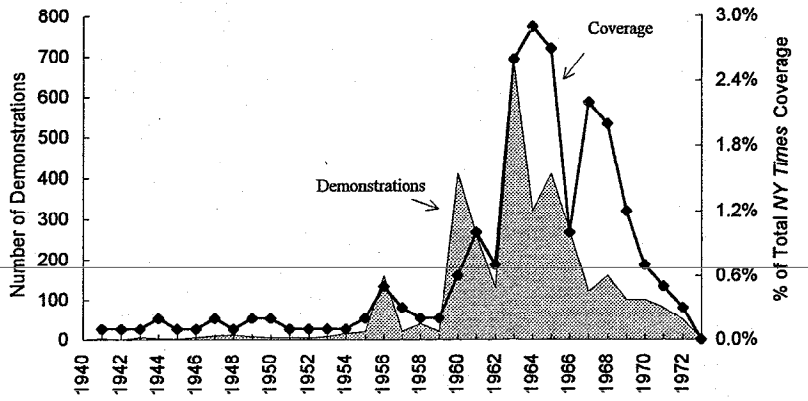

FIGURE 5.1 Civil rights demonstrations and coverage of civil rights demonstrations in the *New York Times*, 1940–1971. *Source:* Burstein 1985, pp. 74, 80.

In the face of increasing intimidation and violence, black Americans nevertheless continued to protest for their rights. Figure 5.1 shows the number of civil rights demonstrations each year from 1940 to 1972. The figure displays an initial spike of activity at the time of the Montgomery bus boycott, and then another and more sustained surge during the Kennedy years. In 1963 alone, more than 700 civil rights demonstrations took place. Most occurred in the South and were protests against local conditions, but they were intended to be witnessed by Americans all over the country, as indeed they were. Vivid accounts of the struggle for civil rights under way in such places as Oxford, Mississippi, and Birmingham, Alabama, began to creep into national news reporting. Civil rights protesters who sat in at segregated lunch counters or hotels were hauled away and jailed; marchers were flattened by high-pressure water hoses and mauled by police dogs; movement headquarters were dynamited; efforts to desegregate public schools were greeted with full-pitched riots. These melo-

dramatic confrontations made terrific stories. Civil rights was national news (also revealed in figure 5.1).

In the meantime, President Johnson was pushing civil rights as a top legislative priority. In July 1964, in the wake of the longest legislative debate in the history of the U.S. Congress and over the fierce objection of Southern Democrats, the Civil Rights Bill became law. Discrimination on account of "race, color, religion, or national origin" was now illegal. To the British historian J. R. Pole, the Civil Rights Act represented a legislative revolution in American history: for the first time, "equality became a major object of government policy."[28]

The act also became a central part of the 1964 presidential campaign, thanks in no small measure to Senator Goldwater's success in capturing his party's presidential nomination. In his campaign, Goldwater argued against the encroachments of the federal government in private affairs in general and against the civil rights legislation sponsored by the Johnson administration in particular. Partly as a consequence, Goldwater did splendidly in the American South. Outside the Deep South, however, the Republican campaign was a disaster: Goldwater carried only his home state of Arizona and was buried under a landslide of historic proportions.

Following his overwhelming victory, President Johnson gave clear indications that government must do more than guarantee civil rights. In a major address delivered at Howard University in 1965, Johnson argued that the black community had "been twisted and battered by endless years of hatred and hopelessness." In language little different from that employed by Dr. King, the president characterized the ghetto as "a world of decay, ringed by an invisible wall," where "escape is arduous and uncertain, and the saving pressures of a more hopeful society are unknown." The president backed up his rhetoric with a flurry of new programs: VISTA, Head Start, Model Cities, the Office of Economic Opportunity, and more. Discrimination in voting was to be eliminated through the Voting Rights Bill, passed in 1965. The president established the Department of Housing and Urban Development, putting in place for the first time the capacity to develop and carry out an urban policy, and appointed Robert Weaver its secretary, the first black cabinet member in U.S. history. Johnson pressed for and eventually obtained legislation to prohibit discrimination in the housing market, through the Fair Housing Act of 1968. And he appointed Thurgood Marshall to the Supreme Court, the ninety-sixth justice and the first black, some twenty-five years after Marshall had argued the *Brown* school desegregation case.

Of all these, perhaps Johnson's most notable accomplishment was the Voting Rights Act, the long-delayed triumph of the struggle to secure the right to vote.

In the aftermath of "bloody Selma," where blacks intent on peacefully petitioning Governor Wallace for the right to vote were set upon by state troopers and local police officers, and beaten, trampled, and teargassed, President Johnson summoned a joint session of Congress.[29] In an evening address broadcast to the nation, Johnson embraced both the methods and the aspirations of the Selma demonstrators, calling for the prompt passage of a voting rights bill, insisting on "no delay, no hesitation, no compromise."[30] After some months of skirmishing, and against a backdrop of continuing violence in the South, Congress finally delivered. The president signed the Voting Rights Act into law on August 6, 1965, thereby bringing to completion a year of remarkable legislative achievements for civil rights. In the assessment of C. Vann Woodward, "Nothing comparable had ever happened before even during the high moments of the First Reconstruction."[31]

Political tempests in Washington often go unnoticed by citizens around the country, but this rule does not apply to the racial crisis of the 1960s. To an unusual degree, the struggle for civil rights caught and held the public's attention. One way to see this is by scanning figure 5.2, which summarizes the results of more than 100 national surveys conducted between 1946 and 1976. In each, Americans were asked to nominate the most important problems facing the country. The question was completely open-ended; people could say whatever they wished. Before the Montgomery bus boycott, as the figure indicates, virtually no American mentioned civil rights. But as the movement gathered momentum, civil rights made its way into the national news and eventually into public consciousness. The figure shows several sharp rises associated with

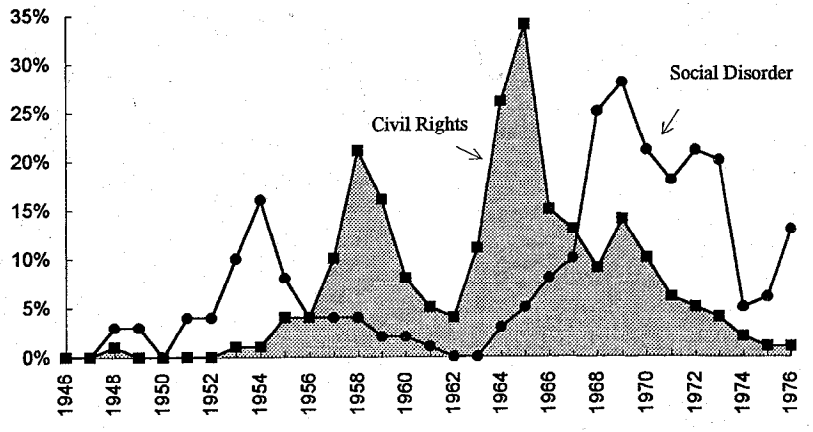

FIGURE 5.2 Percentage of the American public choosing civil rights or social disorder as the country's most important problem, 1946–1976. *Source:* Smith 1980, pp. 170, 171.

dramatic events, like the Little Rock school desegregation controversy in 1957, followed by a sustained takeoff in the latter half of 1963, stimulated, presumably, by the events taking place in Birmingham. Through most of 1964 and 1965, Americans—north and south—regarded civil rights as the nation's most important problem. For one extended moment, from the bombings in Birmingham to the march in Selma, the fight over civil rights commanded center stage.[32]

And with what consequence? Faced with this historic run of events, many white Americans appeared to come to a new conclusion: that segregation and discrimination were wrong, that black Americans should enjoy the same formal rights and opportunities as whites. On questions of broad principle of equal treatment and opportunity, a massive shift of white opinion was taking place.[33]

Presumably some of this change was a direct reflection of what whites saw. To the national audience, the sit-ins, boycotts, marches, freedom rides, and especially the outpouring of violence such protests provoked, vividly exposed the discriminatory practices and racial hatred that prevented blacks from claiming their rights as citizens. Moreover, these dramatic scenes often came accompanied by a kind of moral instruction. President Kennedy, President Johnson, and other prominent figures came to interpret massive resistance as evidence of a glaring moral defect, a failure to live up to America's historic commitment to egalitarian ideals. As one example, in the midst of the beatings and bombings taking place in Birmingham, President Kennedy began an address to the nation by asserting that "we are confronted primarily with a moral issue. It is as old as the Scriptures and it is as clear as the American Constitution. The heart of the question is whether all Americans are to be afforded equal rights and equal opportunities, whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated. . . ."[34] In much the same spirit, President Johnson, in his speech to Congress and the nation calling for immediate action on voting rights, concluded that "equality depends not on the force of arms or tear gas but upon the force of moral right."[35]

What white Americans saw and what they heard turned out to be a powerful combination. In important spheres of life—education, public accommodations, employment, housing, and more—whites moved toward equality. Segregation and discrimination were losing ground. Concern for the predicament blacks faced was understood to be consistent with American principles. One legacy of the civil rights movement, we believe, was this bundling together, in public debate and private attitude, of egalitarian ideals and racial sympathy.

But as civil disobedience in the South was replaced by violence in the cities everywhere, it was not the only lesson white Americans were likely to draw. Five days after the Voting Rights Act was signed into law, the Watts riot exploded. Riots had broken out the previous summer—in Harlem, Bedford-

Stuyvesant, and Rochester in late July, and in Jersey City, Elizabeth, Paterson, and North Philadelphia in August—but they were, relatively speaking, short-lived and easily contained.[36] In Watts the violence raged unchecked for three days, and three days longer in sporadic eruptions. Blacks looted stores, set fires, burned cars, and shot at policemen and firemen. Before the violence was halted, 14,000 National Guard troops, 1,000 police officers, and more than 700 sheriff's deputies were pressed into service. More than 46 square miles—an area larger than Manhattan—came under military control. In the end, 1,000 buildings were damaged, burned, looted, or completely destroyed; almost 4,000 people were arrested; more than 1,000 were injured seriously enough to require medical treatment; and 34 were dead, all but three black.[37]

As horrifying as Watts was, it was merely the beginning. Soon came uprisings in Chicago, New York, Newark, Detroit, and in many other cities, large and small, in every section of the country. In 1967 alone, more than 250 serious disturbances took place. For one long hot summer after another, Americans watched what appeared to be the coming apart of their own country. On the front page of their morning newspapers and on their television screens in the evening appeared dramatic and frightening pictures of devastation and ruin: cities on fire, mobs of blacks looting stores and hurling rocks at police, tanks rumbling down the avenues of American cities. Along with the riots came a new rhetoric that frightened many whites and splintered black leadership: there was less talk of nonviolence and more of self-defense; less yearning for integration and more for solidarity and black nationalism; "We shall overcome" was replaced by Black Power and "burn, baby, burn."

If the civil rights movement and the flagrantly racist reaction it incited compelled many white Americans to express their support for racial equality as a matter of principle, the riots and the new belligerent rhetoric pushed them in quite a different direction. As we saw earlier, civil rights was widely regarded as the nation's most important problem in 1964 and 1965, but began to fade soon thereafter and disappeared entirely by the mid-1970s. Whites seemed to believe that the national government had successfully swept away all the barriers and obstacles that had stood in the way of black participation in American society. Segregation was being dismantled. Discrimination was illegal. Voting rights were being enforced. In the view of many white Americans, the problem of race was solved.

Or rather *that* problem of race was solved. Public discussion of the "race problem" in America no longer referred to ensuring equal rights and opportunities for blacks—that, apparently, had already been accomplished. Instead, discussion centered on the threat that inner-city blacks posed to social order and public safety. This point is made emphatically in figure 5.2. As Americans

lost interest in civil rights, they became preoccupied with violence and disorder in the cities.[38]

This change reflects a transformation in the characterization of race relations dominating news reports and public discourse. Before Watts, the typical picture looked something like this: neatly dressed blacks, petitioning peacefully for their basic rights, crouched on the ground, being pummeled with nightsticks and set upon by police dogs. After Watts, Americans were instead witness to pictures of mobs of young city blacks, hurling bricks at police cars, torching their own neighborhoods, and looting stores of all that they could carry. Such pictures invited the conclusion from whites that after all that had been done for blacks, after all that had been given to them, it was not enough. Blacks wanted more, they demanded more—and they took it.

The riots opened up a huge racial rift. Fear and revulsion against the violence were widespread among both white and black Americans, but whites were much more likely to condemn those who participated in the riots and more eager for the police and National Guard to retaliate against them.[39] Where blacks saw the riots as expressions of legitimate grievances, whites were inclined to explain them as eruptions of black hatred and senseless criminality incited by outside agitators. To many white Americans, then, the civil disorders of the 1960s amounted to an appalling collective mugging.[40]

Understood in this way, the riots created a crisis for liberalism. President Johnson attempted to distinguish between the movement for civil rights—the "orderly struggle for civil rights that has ennobled the last decade"—and the violence and destruction that were sweeping through American cities. This was a difficult distinction to sell, and the political advantage moved decisively to the conservatives:

> Liberals faced the burden of explaining why the riots occurred after so many of the things which they had promised would solve the problems had already been done. They faced accusations that they were unwilling to uphold public order and were proposing to reward rather than punish communities that had spawned mass violence. Politically, liberals suddenly found themselves on the defensive, no longer occupying the high moral ground. Intellectually, they were far from certain about what was required or what would work.[41]

After the riots, conservative arguments took on new appeal, now in tune with white apprehensions. There was less talk about equality and more about law and order. Onto the national stage strutted George Wallace, followed in short order by the "new" Richard Nixon and by Ronald Reagan. Each, in his own way, gave public expression to simmering racial resentments. By interpreting inner-city violence and poverty as glaring manifestations of the failure of blacks to live up to American values, and by placing these problems at the center of their campaigns, Wallace, Nixon, and Reagan, among others, helped to create and legitimize a new form of prejudice. They did not promote biological racism: they were not white supremacists; they did not allege genetic impairments; they did not promise a return to segregation; they did not imply that blacks were second-class citizens or that they should be treated differently than anyone else. Their message was subtle, rather than blatant: it was that blacks should behave themselves. They should take quiet advantage of the ample opportunities now provided them. Government had been too generous, had given blacks too much, and blacks, for their part, had accepted these gifts all too readily. Discrimination was illegal, opportunities were plentiful. Blacks should work their way up without handouts or special favors in a society that was now color-blind.

At the core of this new resentment was not whether blacks possessed the inborn ability to succeed, but rather whether they would try. Now that all major obstacles to their improvement had supposedly been removed, would blacks apply themselves, as others had before them? One might say that black Americans would now be judged as Martin Luther King had wished, that is, by the "content of their character." The riots specifically and inner-city life generally were interpreted by many whites as repudiations of individualism, sacred American commitments to hard work, discipline, and self-sacrifice.

And more was to come. The riots that had handed the political advantage to conservatives were followed by a series of contentious public issues entangled in race, which, to many whites, exposed both the misguided benevolence of major American institutions and the moral deficiency of blacks unwilling to make it honestly on their own. These included allegations of fraud and abuse in the welfare system, explosions of crime, the dissolution of the traditional family, the plague of drugs, and dependence on government handouts. Most recently, public debate on matters of race has focused on affirmative action. Opponents of affirmative action see government requiring employers to give jobs and promotions to underqualified blacks, schools filling up with ill-prepared and undeserving black students, judges redrawing district lines to guarantee black candidates safe election, and colleges caving in to black students with codes that restrict speech and multicultural curricula that ridicule traditional learning.

Each of these episodes has provided a public stage for the creation and expression of racial animosity. A new form of prejudice has come to prominence, one that is preoccupied with matters of moral character, informed by the virtues

associated with the traditions of individualism. At its center are the contentions that blacks do not try hard enough to overcome the difficulties they face and that they take what they have not earned. Today, we say, prejudice is expressed in the language of American individualism.

The Meaning and Measurement of Racial Resentment

With these developments in mind, we attempted to measure racial resentment with a battery of six questions included in the 1986 NES.[42] Each question was presented as an assertion; whites were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with each, and how strongly they did so:

> *Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.*
>
> *Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.*
>
> *It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.*
>
> *Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.*
>
> *Most blacks who receive money from welfare programs could get along without it if they tried.*
>
> *Government officials usually pay less attention to a request or complaint from a black person than from a white person.*

Compared with most efforts to measure racial animosity, these questions should appear rather subtle. They do not require whites to declare in straightforward fashion that blacks are dim-witted or lazy or promiscuous. Their approach is more roundabout. The questions distinguish between those whites who are generally sympathetic toward blacks and those who are generally unsympathetic. It could be said that our questions do for race what Adorno's *Authoritarian Personality* did for anti-Semitism. The famous "F-scale" that Adorno and his research team employed to measure authoritarianism was composed of questions that resemble ours, in that they were carefully formulated, as Roger Brown put it, "to express a subtle hostility without seeming to offend the democratic values that most subjects would feel bound to support. Each question has a kind of fair-minded and reasonable veneer. It is sometimes rather difficult to find the sting."[43]

As table 5.1 reveals, many white Americans are quite prepared to express such a "subtle hostility" toward blacks. Substantial majorities agreed that if

Table 5.1 Racial Resentment among White Americans

1. Most blacks who receive money from welfare programs could get along without it if they tried.	
Agree strongly	25.4%
Agree somewhat	35.3
Neither agree nor disagree	14.2
Disagree somewhat	18.7
Disagree strongly	6.5
2. Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.	
Agree strongly	3.3
Agree somewhat	15.4
Neither agree nor disagree	22.8
Disagree somewhat	38.0
Disagree strongly	20.5
3. Government officials usually pay less attention to a request or complaint from a black person than from a white person.	
Agree strongly	3.9
Agree somewhat	17.8
Neither agree nor disagree	28.3
Disagree somewhat	30.5
Disagree strongly	19.4
4. Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.	
Agree strongly	32.9
Agree somewhat	33.7
Neither agree nor disagree	12.4
Disagree somewhat	16.2
Disagree strongly	4.7
[In past studies, we have asked people why they think white people seem to get more of the good things in life in America—such as better jobs and more money—than black people do. These are some of the reasons given by both blacks and whites.]	
5. It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.	
Agree strongly	22.4
Agree somewhat	36.9
Neither agree nor disagree	13.3
Disagree somewhat	19.1
Disagree strongly	8.2
6. Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.	
Agree strongly	17.0
Agree somewhat	41.1
Neither agree nor disagree	9.8
Disagree somewhat	19.2
Disagree strongly	12.9

Source: 1986 National Election Study.

blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites; that most blacks who receive money from welfare programs could get along without it if they tried; and that blacks should overcome prejudice on their own without any special favors. Likewise, many rejected the assertion that blacks have gotten less than they deserve in recent years; that blacks receive less attention from government officials than whites do; or that generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way into the middle class.[44]

Racial Resentment = Racial Prejudice?

Are white Americans who express such views prejudiced? The answer depends on what is meant by prejudice. This is an important and delicate point, worth a bit of our time.

Prejudice, according to Gordon Allport, is "an antipathy based on a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he is a member of that group."[45] The questions we use to measure racial resentment certainly fulfill some of Allport's requirements. For one thing, our questions focus on blacks as a group. The questions are categorical and abstract; they take as their frame of reference blacks as a whole.

The questions also have a strong evaluative component; they were designed to reveal "antipathy." They do so, notice, without making reference to genetic inferiority, so common to white supremacist ideology and to southern campaigns of a generation ago. In recognition of the decline of biological racism, the questions focus not on the inborn abilities of blacks, but on how hard blacks are willing to try. The questions are preoccupied with character: effort, enterprise, and determination. As portrayed in these questions, the "problem of race" is not the threat that blacks might pose to whites' personal safety or to their material well-being, but to their sense of civic virtue. To whites who agree with the premise of these questions, blacks constitute a moral threat, one that challenges "how we are to order our lives and our life as a community."[46]

So far our questions fit the classic definition of prejudice reasonably well. But what about Allport's insistence that prejudiced beliefs are erroneous, that prejudice is rooted in a "faulty" generalization?

It would not be hard to make a case that the assertion "if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites" is wrong, just as it is wrong to deny that generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class. In both cases, what we are calling the racially resentful position *is* faulty. But on our other questions, it is more difficult to determine which answer is correct. For

example, the first question presented in table 5.1 implies that the prejudice faced by blacks is no different from the prejudice faced by the Irish, the Italian, or the Jews—which is false. But the core of the question goes to whether blacks deserve special help, and it is hard to imagine authoritative evidence on whether whites who claim blacks should work their way up without any special favors are, or are not, mistaken. If we insist that prejudice is thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant, then we cannot say here with perfect confidence that we have a measure of prejudice.[47]

Prejudice, finally, is defined also by its inflexibility. Implicit here is a distinction between ordinary errors of misjudgment and the more serious and sinister case of prejudice. As Allport put it, "If a person is capable of rectifying his erroneous judgments in the light of new evidence, he is not prejudiced. Prejudgments become prejudice only when they are not reversible when exposed to new information."[48] We simply do not have any evidence that goes directly to this point. People hold on to their racial resentments with unusual tenacity, as we will see later, but this does not satisfy Allport's stronger claim.

In short, "racial resentment," as we use the term here, should not be confused with racial prejudice, as Allport defines it. We cannot be certain that the racially unsympathetic sentiments spelled out in table 5.1 are expressions of presumption and ignorance, and we do not know for sure whether whites might reverse their position should they be presented with evidence on the other side. This is tricky business, and we are not done with it yet: in the book's final chapter, we will come round again to the question of prejudice.

In other respects, our measure of racial resentment lives up to the empirical requirements normally expected of prejudice, as we will see over the next several pages. That is, racial resentment is coherent and stable, just as racial prejudice is expected to be; its expression is curtailed in the presence of black Americans, a sign that whites recognize that blacks would take offense; it powerfully predicts derogatory racial stereotypes, which are often thought to be the core of prejudice, and it is associated with, but distinct from, biological forms of racism, which it has largely replaced.

Racial Resentment Is Coherent

It is conceivable for people to answer the questions set out in table 5.1 in ways that have little to do with race. For example, those who say that if blacks only tried harder they could be as well off as whites might be expressing faith in individual initiative in general. Or those who agree with the notion that blacks should work their way up without special help might be signaling commitment to the ideal of equal treatment. It is conceivable, but this would mean that the sentiments expressed in table 5.1 would not really belong together.

Table 5.2 Pearson Correlations between Answers to the Racial Resentment Questions

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	—					
2	.39	—				
3	.19	.40	—			
4	.50	.43	.19	—		
5	.51	.37	.16	.56	—	
6	.31	.40	.24	.37	.38	—

Source: 1986 National Election Study.
Note: Questions are given in full in table 5.1.

They would be a hodge-podge of complaints, each reflecting a different belief or value. Against this, we say that the various resentments expressed in table 5.1 constitute a coherent system of ideas, one centering on black Americans. Resentment over blacks getting ahead unfairly is the one theme that runs through *all* six questions. If we are right, then whites who agree that if blacks would only try harder, they would be as well off as whites should also be inclined to deny that slavery and discrimination have created conditions that impede black progress, to agree that blacks should work their way up without any special favors, and so on through all the questions.

Table 5.2 reveals that white Americans show just this kind of consistency. The table presents evidence on the degree of association between answers to each pair of questions, as indexed by the Pearson correlation coefficient.[49] Judged against normal standards, the correlations displayed there are quite strong, ranging from .16 to .56, and averaging .36. Thus the ostensibly diverse sentiments expressed by the racial resentment questions are not in fact a miscellaneous collection; they do indeed reflect an empirically coherent outlook. White Americans answer these questions as if they had one thing primarily in mind.[50]

Racial Resentment Is Stable

Prejudice is an acquired taste. Children enter the world free of any such animosity, but their innocence is temporary, for they are born into a world in which socially significant distinctions are already in place. By the time American children enter elementary school, they know that racial groups exist, and that persons belong to such groups on the basis of observable characteristics: skin color, facial features, the texture of their hair. They know which racial group they belong to, and they know which racial groups are good and which are bad. White children have strong positive associations with the term "white," referring both to color and to race, and strong negative associations with "black"; and they almost never express a wish to be a member of a racial group other than their own.[51] As children's cognitive abilities mature, they come to understand racial categories as permanent and immutable and their perception of differences between racial groups is accentuated.[52] By the early adult years, racial ideas are difficult to reverse; at this stage, race has become a standard and automatic way of categorizing and evaluating the social world. As Allport once put it, "A prejudice, unlike a simple misconception, is actively resistant to all evidence that would unseat it."[53]

If we have measured racial resentment well, then white Americans should answer the NES questions in essentially the same way when offered a second chance. We can see whether this is so by taking advantage of the 1990–92 NES panel design. Roughly one-half of those interviewed in the 1992 NES study were first questioned in 1990, and on both occasions they were asked the same four racial resentment questions, a subset of the original six.

One standard way to give mathematical representation to individual stability is through the Pearson correlation coefficient. In this context, a Pearson correlation of 1.0 would mean perfect stability: an ordering of white Americans by their scores on the racial resentment scale administered in 1990 would correspond exactly to the ordering revealed by their 1992 scores. A correlation of 0.0, in contrast, would mean perfect instability: racial resentment scores in 1990 bear no relation to scores two years later.

For the racial resentment scale, the Pearson correlation between the 1990 and 1992 observations is .68. This estimate of continuity is well above the zero chaos point, but falls visibly short of perfect stability. So how stable is racial resentment? How big is .68?

One answer is provided by comparing the Pearson correlation of .68 with continuity estimates of other political sentiments. From this perspective, racial resentment looks quite stable: substantially more stable than views on equality (Pearson r = .49), ideological identification (r = .49), or positions on various matters of public policy (Pearson r's hover around .4). Whites' racial resentments even approach the stability of their identification with a political party (r = .79), widely regarded as providing the stability benchmark for political attitudes.[54]

Thus a Pearson correlation of .68, viewed comparatively, is quite impressive, and it is the more impressive when we recognize that it almost certainly underestimates the real stability of racial resentment. Our observations of change over time reflect a mixture of real instability (white Americans' changing their minds about black Americans) and artificial instability (produced by inevitable errors in our measures). With this in mind, it would be useful to produce an estimate of the stability of racial resentment once the intrusions of unreliability are removed.

We do this in two ways. Both procedures require that we have multiple measures of racial resentment on more than one occasion, as we do. The first follows the standard recommendation from test theory in psychometrics.[55] With estimates of the reliability of the racial resentment scale in each year, we can correct the correlation of .68 for the unreliability due to random measurement error (correction for attenuation, as it is called). When we do so, the correlation rises to .89. This means that if we had in our possession perfectly reliable measures of racial resentment (in place of the fallible measures employed in the 1990–92 NES panel study), we would have found a correlation of .89 (rather than .68). And a correlation of .89 over a two-year period, though not quite perfect, is certainly consistent with the claim that racial resentment, like prejudice, is difficult to reverse.[56]

A second way to partition unreliability from stability makes use of confirmatory factor analysis. Here we treat racial resentment as a latent variable in order to estimate the correlation between resentment in 1990 and 1992, with unreliability once again removed. The results, shown in table 5.3, indicate that the model fits the data reasonably well. Each of the four questions loads substantially on the racial resentment factor, and the pattern of the loadings is highly similar across the two years. This model estimates the stability correlation between resentment in 1990 and resentment in 1992 to be .78. Once the random and systematic components of unreliability are removed, therefore, racial resentment is once again revealed to be stable—not perfectly stable, not fixed, but predominantly stable.[57]

Table 5.3 Stability of Racial Resentment, 1990–1992 (confirmatory factor analysis)

	Factor Loadings	
	Resentment_{90}	Resentment_{92}
$\text{Blacks gotten less than deserved}_{90}$	.57	
$\text{Blacks should work their way up}_{90}$	.82	
$\text{Blacks need only try harder}_{90}$	.79	
$\text{Slavery and discrimination}_{90}$	.53	
$\text{Blacks gotten less than deserved}_{92}$		.65
$\text{Blacks should work their way up}_{92}$		.76
$\text{Blacks need only try harder}_{92}$		.80
$\text{Slavery and discrimination}_{92}$		.57
Correlation between Resentment_{90} and Resentment_{92} = .78		
Chi-square with 15 degrees of freedom = 90.41		
Goodness of fit = .960		
Adjusted goodness of fit = .905		
Root mean square residual = .053		

Source: 1990–92 National Election Panel Study.

Racial Resentment Is Conditioned by Race of Interviewer

In Chapter 2 we argued that in a society like our own, characterized by racial segregation and tension, an extended conversation between a black person and a white person is unlikely to be experienced as innocuous by either party. And indeed we found that whites interviewed by blacks expressed less conservative views on matters of race policy than did whites interviewed by whites.

The same should hold true for the expression of racial resentment—and it does. When questioned by black interviewers, whites appeared less resentful than they did when they were questioned by white interviewers. The effect is not large, but it holds for five of the six questions taken individually, for the scale as a whole, and with the effects due to social background characteristics statistically held constant. Race-of-interviewer effects also show up, this time more sizably, in both the 1988 and 1992 National Election Studies. That whites present themselves differently to a black interviewer than to a white interviewer is consistent with the claim that we are really measuring *racial* resentment.[58]

Racial Resentment Predicts Derogatory Stereotypes

Social animosity is often expressed through stereotypes, pejorative beliefs that in-group members hold toward members of outgroups. As a further test of the validity of our measure of racial resentment, we examined the extent to which scores on the racial resentment scale predict endorsement of traditional racial stereotypes. This analysis is possible because the 1992 NES included both our measures of racial resentment and a set of stereotype questions originally developed at the National Opinion Research Center for the General Social Survey.[59]

In some ways the GSS stereotype questions are similar to the questions we have been analyzing. Like their NES counterparts, the GSS questions are categorical and abstract, in that they take as their frame of reference blacks as a group. But the GSS questions mix old, or biological, and new, or individualistic, forms of animosity. One item questions blacks' intelligence, consistent with a central claim of biological racism; another questions blacks' effort and motivation, consistent with a central claim of racial resentment. And finally, the GSS questions take quite a different form from what we have used to measure racial resentment. Here citizens are presented with a series of paired antonyms (hardworking versus lazy, say) and asked to judge whether members of some designated group (blacks, for example) are mostly hardworking, mostly lazy, or somewhere in between. In the 1992 NES, three pairs of antonyms were in-

cluded: hardworking versus lazy, unintelligent versus intelligent, and violent versus peaceful.

By comparing the judgments whites offer about blacks to those they make about their own racial group, it is possible to derive a measure of racial stereotyping. And according to the 1992 NES results, most white Americans do in fact subscribe to racial stereotypes. That is, they believe that blacks are less hardworking than whites, that blacks are more violent than whites, and that blacks are less intelligent than whites. Some whites see no difference between the races, but most of the variation among white Americans is in *how* inferior black Americans are, whether the racial superiority that whites enjoy in essential capacities and fundamental qualities is overwhelming or slight.

Can racial resentment predict, as to our way of thinking it must, the extent to which white Americans subscribe to such stereotypes? To find out, we coded the three stereotype measures 0–1, with 1.0 representing complete endorsement of the stereotype, 0.0 its complete reversal, and 0.5 the color-blind view that blacks and whites differ not at all. We then simply regressed each of the stereotype measures against our measure of racial resentment (also coded 0–1).

The results, shown in table 5.4, indicate that racial resentment and racial stereotyping are indeed closely related. White Americans who express racial sympathy on the racial resentment scale (a perfect score of 0) show up almost precisely at the color-blind 0.5 neutral point on all three stereotype measures: they say whites and blacks are indistinguishable. At the same time, white Americans at the other end of the racial resentment scale (with a perfect score of 1) are predicted to score around .65 on the stereotype measures: they say whites are much smarter, much harder working, and much less violent. The impact of racial resentment on racial stereotypes is strong in all three cases, but it is least strong, by some 50%, for beliefs about intelligence, the one item of the three closely associated with biological forms of racism. This suggests the distinctiveness of contemporary racial resentment from its biological predecessor, an issue we take up more directly next.

Table 5.4 Predicting Racial Stereotypes from Racial Resentment

	Blacks Are Comparatively		
	Lazy	Unintelligent	Violent
Racial resentment	.18	.12	.19
	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)
Constant	.48	.50	.50
	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)
R-squared	.11	.05	.11
Standard error	.12	.11	.12
Number of cases	1,797	1,780	1,782

Source: 1992 National Election Study.
Note: Table entry is *B*, the unstandardized ordinary least squares regression coefficient, with standard errors in parentheses underneath.

Racial Resentment Is Distinct from Biological Racism

We have argued that contemporary expressions of prejudice no longer center on claims of racial inferiority rooted in biology. Today, we say, prejudice is preoccupied less with inborn ability and more with effort and initiative. But does racial resentment really constitute a new form? Or is it in fact indistinguishable from nineteenth-century biological racism?

Remember that the 1986 NES included a question that was intended to elicit in straightforward fashion the unvarnished racism of the American past, the claim that blacks are genetically inferior. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the assertion that blacks were less well off in America because they "come from a less able race." As noted earlier, by 1986, most whites, but far from all, rejected biological inferiority as an explanation for racial differences.[60]

It would be surprising and, from a theoretical point of view, disconcerting if the position white Americans took toward the claim of black genetic inferiority turned out to be completely unrelated to racial resentment as we have defined and measured it here. Old-fashioned bigotry and contemporary racial resentment share an attitude of hostility toward black Americans, and this should be reflected in a positive relationship between them. On the other hand, we would be equally disconcerted if the relationship turned out to be strong. Whites who believe blacks to be their biological inferiors might resent the special help that blacks supposedly receive, but they also might think that blacks require such help precisely because of their genetic handicap. Similarly, whites who express indignation over blacks failing to live up to the standards of self-sacrifice and self-reliance may genuinely reject the claim of biological inferiority. Old-fashioned bigotry and contemporary racial resentment are related, but distinct, concepts—or so we say.

The relevant evidence runs this way. Answers to the genetic inferiority question are related to answers to the six resentment questions, but ever so slightly: the Pearson correlation between the scale of racial resentment and opinions on blacks' inborn inferiority is just .12. Biological inferiority no longer appears to be the centerpiece of American racial thinking.[61]

Racial Resentment and Public Policy

All this evidence suggests that we have in hand a reliable and valid measure of racial resentment, one well suited to modern-day American race relations.

But our interest lies less in racial resentment for its own sake, and more in how it is played out in public life. Here it is our purpose to determine the effect of racial resentment on the views white Americans take on a wide variety of social policies.

To estimate this effect, we must first place racial resentment in a larger theoretical framework. The evidence we have just presented is reassuring on the quality of our measures, but does nothing to relieve us of the obligation to take into account alternative interpretations of public opinion on matters of race. It would be foolish to assume that whites' views on, say, affirmative action are *only* expressions of racial resentment. To generate estimates of the political effect of racial resentment that anyone should take seriously, we must at the same time take into account the effects due to other plausible considerations. These include, most notably, whatever threats to material interests that appear to be at stake, general opposition to government intervention in private affairs, commitment to the abstract American ideal of individualism, and principled reservations about the application of equality to society.

Mindful of this obligation, we will estimate the impact of racial resentment in several rounds of analysis. Each round represents a distinct, but plausible, specification. We rely first of all on data provided by the 1986 NES, but move beyond it when we can. We begin with simple specifications, adding complexity as we proceed.

Racial Resentment and Race Policy

Our immediate purpose is to estimate the impact of racial resentment where it is likely to be most pronounced: on policies that deal explicitly and unambiguously with race. On matters of school desegregation and affirmative action, black Americans are the intended primary beneficiaries, and all our questions name them as such. If racial resentment is to come into play in public opinion at all, it should show up most plainly here.

In this first analysis, we also take into account, in addition to racial resentment, the effects due to material threats to self-interest, opposition to the intrusions of government in private affairs, a wide array of social background characteristics (age, region, gender, Hispanic ethnicity, family income, education, occupational status), as well as race of interviewer.[62]

Column 1 of table 5.5 presents the results. The rows of the table correspond to each of the six race policies included in the 1986 NES. The estimated effect of racial resentment is provided in each case by ordinary least squares regression. Keeping in mind that the policy questions, like the racial resentment scale, are coded on the 0–1 interval, the coefficients on display in column 1 of table 5.5 indicate a very substantial effect of racial resentment on white opinion.

Table 5.5 Impact of Racial Resentment on White Americans' Opinions on Race Policy

	1986			1988	1992	
Policy	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Fair employment	.57	.57	.51	.63	.63	.51
School desegregation	.30	.28	.18	—	.40	.17
Federal spending	.45	.44	.36	.41	.59	.73
Government effort	.44	.44	.37	.53	.51	.59
Preferential hiring	.40	.40	.38	.42	.47	.41
College quotas	.60	.61	.59	.63	.71	.60

Source: 1986, 1988, 1992 National Election Studies.

Note: Table entry is *B*, the unstandardized regression coefficient representing the effect of racial resentment (coded 0–1) on whites' views on race policy (also coded 0–1). All coefficients are statistically significant. The standard errors range from .05 to .10. Estimates provided by ordinary least squares regression, except in column 6, which are provided by two-stage least squares.

Consider, as a typical example, the question of whether the federal government should provide special assistance to black Americans. According to table 5.5, the regression estimate of the effect of racial resentment on this question of policy is .44. This means that two white Americans, identical in social background and political outlook, who differ only in that one is racially sympathetic (scoring 0 on the racial resentment scale) while the other is racially resentful (a score of 1.0), will differ from each other on the question of federal assistance by a value of .44. When we consider that the effects due to other considerations are taken into account, and that the policy scale itself ranges from 0, meaning that the government has a special obligation to blacks, to 1, meaning that blacks should get ahead on their own without the help of government, a difference of .44 is large.

Indeed, column 1 of table 5.5 presents nothing but sizable coefficients. The effect of racial resentment is greatest on the question of quotas in college admissions and smallest—though still appreciable—on the question of school desegregation. These results imply that white Americans' objections to policies intended to diminish racial inequalities are expressions, in large part, of racial resentment.

Racial Resentment and General Individualism

What happens to our results, and to the conclusion they imply, when we take abstract individualism into account? To find out, we simply added a measure of individualism into our first round regression analysis. For the purpose of this analysis, the six individualism questions included in the 1986 NES are ideal: the questions are abstract, they make no specific reference to blacks or whites, and they concentrate for the most part on the virtue of self-reliance and the power of individual initiative (e.g., "Most people who don't get ahead

should not blame the system; they have only themselves to blame"). Individualism, measured in this way, will play a prominent role in the next chapter, as part of our more general argument that public opinion is shaped by American principles. Our purpose here is limited to establishing whether the effect of racial resentment diminishes when we also take into account general individualism.[63]

Adding individualism changes nothing. For each of the six race policies, the estimated impact of racial resentment is completely unaltered. This can be seen by comparing the string of coefficients in column 1 of table 5.5 with the corresponding string of coefficients in column 2. The two are indistinguishable. The effect of racial resentment is completely unaffected by the presence of individualism. In the meantime, the estimated effect of individualism itself in these six cases is essentially zero.[64] We will have more to say about individualism in Chapter 6, but this is what we can say now: white opposition to racial change appears to be motivated not by commitment to individualism in general, but by resentment directed against blacks in particular.[65]

Racial Resentment and Race Policy in Different Settings

That our estimate of the impact of racial resentment is unaffected by individualism is both important and convenient, for it allows us to replicate our analysis in NES studies that do not include measures of individualism. Thus we can see whether the effects of resentment so dramatically on display in 1986 also show up under a variety of circumstances, free of the worry that our estimate is biased because of the omission of individualism.

In particular we can repeat our analysis twice, making use of the 1988 and 1992 NES presidential election studies. The 1988 NES carried all but one of the six race policy questions that have been the center of our attention so far; the 1992 NES carried them all. Both studies also included virtually the same array of social background characteristics that we made use of in our analysis of the 1986 NES, and both included a measure of limited government. Most important, both studies carried four of the original six questions that made up the 1986 NES racial resentment scale—the first four questions, as they appear on page 106. The resulting resentment scale is briefer and slightly less reliable in each case than the 1986 version, but in some ways it may be better. The two questions that were set aside in the 1988 and 1992 studies are those least justifiable as measures of prejudice (on the interpretation that prejudical beliefs are erroneous). Moreover, uniquely among the original set of six, the two explicitly invoke government, referring to "welfare" in one case and "government officials" in the other. This means that the 1986 NES racial resentment scale incorporates elements that are uncomfortably close to what we are trying to explain, namely, public policy on race. In short, the 1988 and 1992 NES studies may provide us with more than precisely calibrated replications; they may actually provide the better test of the power of racial resentment.

The results from 1988 and 1992 are presented in columns 4 and 5 of table 5.5, and they are striking. The powerful effects of racial resentment first detected in 1986 are even more powerful in 1988 and in 1992. These findings, based on a sharpened measure of racial resentment, strengthen our original conclusion. White opposition to policies that would provide opportunity and assistance to blacks is primarily an expression of racial resentment.[66]

Resentment and Equality

So far we have found powerful effects of racial resentment on white opinion toward various aspects of racial policy. But this evidence is not fully convincing, because we have not yet taken into account the real possibility that white opinion on racial matters is derived at least in part from beliefs about equality. In the next chapter, we develop the argument that American public opinion has a foundation in principles, and in claims about equality in particular. As we will see there, much scholarship on the American political tradition takes as a central point what Tocqueville referred to as the American "passion for equality." The implication of this line of analysis is to suggest that opinion on matters of race might well turn on the extent to which Americans subscribe to doctrines of equality. And this point takes on immediate relevance here when we recognize that racial resentments and beliefs about equality are likely to be correlated. It should not surprise us to discover that racially sympathetic whites are inclined to embrace egalitarian principles, while racially resentful whites tend to express reservations about equality. And this means we need to take views on equality into account here, as we try to ascertain the political effect of racial resentment.

One way to do this is simple and straightforward. To our first round of analysis, we just add a measure of principled reservations about the application of equality to American society. This measure is based on an averaged response to six equally weighted questions that primarily concern the desirability of equality of opportunity, pitched at an abstract level (e.g., "Our society should do whatever is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed").[67]

Bringing in equality in this way diminishes the effect of racial resentment. These results, which are taken from the 1986 NES, are presented in column 3 of table 5.5. They show that in the presence of equality, the estimated direct effect

of racial resentment is somewhat reduced. The reduction is appreciable in just one case, however, on school integration, where the direct effect of resentment diminishes by about 40%. In all other cases, the impact of racial resentment declines either modestly or not at all. Thus under stringent statistical controls, racial resentment remains a powerful force in white opinion.

Indeed, the impact of racial resentment is probably stronger than it appears in these last results. As we said, this first way of bringing equality into the analysis is straightforward but also, if we are not careful, misleading. That the direct effect of racial resentment declines in the presence of equality does not necessarily mean that the we should readjust downward our assessment of its political potency. This is so because beliefs about equality may be in large part a *product* of racial animosity. Views about equality of opportunity in general are, perhaps, reflections of sentiments toward the social groups that have been at the center of particular and conspicuous struggles over equality. Put more strongly than we actually believe, when white Americans are asked to turn their minds to equality in the abstract, they are really turning their minds to equalities in the concrete, and especially to racial disputes over equality in particular. By not taking this *indirect* effect of racial resentment into account, our first results on equality may lead us to underestimate its real (or total) effect.

It is of course possible to turn this argument around, to claim that resentment toward blacks is a product of general egalitarian sentiments. Should this be true, then the strong direct effects of racial resentment displayed in column 3 of table 5.5 provide a good reading of its real power.

The general difficulty here of settling by assumption the relationship between equality and racial resentment suggests an additional analysis. In this specification, we estimate the impact of racial resentment and equality on white opinion toward racial policy. As we do so, racial resentment is assumed to be a cause of equality, and, simultaneously, equality is assumed to be a cause of racial resentment. The practical obstacles that stand in the way of estimating these effects can be surmounted by taking advantage of the 1990–92 NES panel design, which includes measures of resentment and equality on both interviews, along with the standard set of race policy questions in 1992.[68]

The results are shown in the last column of table 5.5. They tell a by now familiar story, that of the political power of racial resentment. They suggest that previously we may have exaggerated a bit the power of racial resentment on matters of school desegregation and fair employment (where views on equality turn out to be very important), and at the same time, underestimated the power of resentment on issues of federal responsibility. But everywhere, our results say, racial resentment is important.

Resentment and Opinion beyond the Racial Domain

Finally we wondered about the impact of racial resentment on issues that lie outside the domain of race. To inform this analysis, we made use of the categories introduced in Chapter 2 and the rich set of policy questions included in the 1992 NES. We distinguished among explicit racial issues, where, as we have just seen, the impact of racial resentment is substantial; implicit racial issues, which make no mention of blacks and whites but that may be widely understood to have a racial implication (e.g., federal support for Food Stamps); broad-based social programs (e.g., government spending on Social Security); moral issues raised by the religious right (e.g., parental consent for abortion); new issues arising out of surges in immigration (e.g., restricting the flow of immigrants into the country); and, finally, matters of foreign policy (e.g., U.S. relations with what used to be the Soviet Union). Heading into this analysis, we expected that the impact of racial resentment would be most pronounced in policy disputes where the racial dimension is explicit and out in the open, substantially smaller but still visible on implicit race policy, and essentially disappear thereafter, as issues of public contention become farther and farther removed from American race relations.

The results are displayed in table 5.6, organized by category, from explicit racial policy at the top to foreign policy at the bottom. Each entry in the table is the unstandardized version of the ordinary least squares regression coefficient, giving the effect of racial resentment on white opinion on each of the various policies. In all cases, the estimated effect of racial resentment is over and above the effects due to limited government, social background, race of interviewer, and (most important) equal opportunity. If anything, then, the effects presented in table 5.6 may underestimate the actual impact of racial resentment.[69]

Results generally conform to expectations: the effects of racial resentment are huge at the top and small at the bottom, as the issue domain proceeds from race to foreign relations. But the table contains some surprises as well. One is the strong effect of racial resentment on issues where race is present only by assumption. Racially resentful whites are a good bit less enthusiastic about increasing federal support for the Food Stamps program, for example, and they are a good bit more enthusiastic about capital punishment for convicted murderers. And so it goes for welfare, urban unrest, and sanctions against South Africa: even when policies are described in ways that make no mention of race, racial resentment plays a prominent role. These results suggest how far race has infiltrated discussions of American policy.

Far, but not all the way. Much as we had expected, the effect of racial re-

Table 5.6 Effect of Racial Resentment on White Public Opinion

Integrated Schools	Fair Employment	Government Assistance	Federal Spending	Preferential Hiring	College Quotas
.37	.67	.47	.49	.43	.68
(.06)	(.06)	(.03)	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)

Food Stamps	Welfare	Remedies for Urban Unrest	Sanctions against South Africa$_{86}$	Capital Punishment
.27	.22	.23	.46	.33
(.04)	(.04)	(.04)	(.10)	(.04)

Homeless	Medicare	Family Leave	Social Security	Education	Childcare	Poor
.05	−.08	.18	−.16	−.05	.12	.10
(.03)	(.03)	(.05)	(.04)	(.03)	(.04)	(.04)

	Abortion				Sexual Harassment		Gay Rights			
Prayer in School	Women's right	Parental consent	Government subsidy	Spousal notification	Serious problem	Requires legislation	Protect against job discrim.	Gays in military	Gays adopt children	School choice
.07	−.05	.26	.15	.19	.11	.14	.21	.15	.24	.12
(.03)	(.04)	(.04)	(.05)	(.06)	(.05)	(.05)	(.06)	(.06)	(.05)	(.08)

Restricting Immigration	Withholding Benefits from Immigrants	English Official Language
.21	.22	.26
(.03)	(.06)	(.06)

Compete with Soviet Union	Keep out of Central America	Defense Spending
.29	.14	.10
(.06)	(.05)	(.03)

Source: 1986 and 1992 National Election Studies.

Note: Table entry is *B*, the unstandardized form of the ordinary least squares coefficient, with standard error in parentheses underneath. Each regression equation included measures of limited government, equal opportunity, social background, and race of interviewer.

sentment diminishes sharply on broad social programs, the next category in table 5.6. Racially resentful whites are no more likely to oppose Medicare, or to cut federal aid to the homeless, or to disapprove of federal support for public education, or to press for reductions in Social Security. All in all, racial resentment seems quite irrelevant to white Americans' views on social programs that distribute benefits and opportunities widely. Two exceptions stand out in table 5.6, however, and they may be related in that both entail intrusions upon traditional family arrangements. On child care and family leave, racially resentful whites are a bit less inclined to support policies that would make it easier for women to raise a family and to continue working outside the home. But these are modest effects, and as a general matter, racial resentments have little influence over white Americans' opinions on social spending.

A second major surprise comes with the issues of morality and rights. We expected that racial resentment would have negligible effects here, and in some respects this turned out to be true. Resentments of a racial sort had little or no effect on the views white Americans took on school prayer, on choice in public education, or on whether or not women have a right to abortion. But as table 5.6 shows, racial resentment had a substantial impact on other aspects of opinion within this domain. Racially resentful whites are less impressed with sexual harassment than are racially sympathetic whites: less likely to assign sexual harassment high priority and less likely to say that more needs to be done to control it. Racially resentful whites are no more likely to deny women the right to abortion as a matter of principle, but they are more likely to support various practical limitations on abortion: they favor parental consent; they oppose government subsidies; and they support spousal notification. And last, whites who express resentment toward black Americans are reluctant to extend rights and protections to gay and lesbian Americans: they are more opposed to allowing gays in the military, they are less persuaded that homosexuals require protection against discrimination on the job, and they are more opposed to the adoption of children by gay couples. The effects of racial resentment here are not overwhelming, but neither are they dismissable. They indicate an impressive breadth to the political power of racial resentment, one that we had not anticipated.

This story line continues in the next row of table 5.6, where we see quite strong association between racial resentment and white opinion on matters of immigration. Whites who resent blacks are also more inclined to favor restrictions on the flow of immigrants into the country, more likely to say that those who do come into the country should not be eligible for government benefits, and more likely to favor the establishment of English as an official language. Nativist reactions to immigration are nothing new in American political life; it

is perhaps no surprise to see another.[70] What *is* surprising, however, is that the connection is so visible in our results, even though current immigration comes predominantly from Central and South America and the Pacific rim, while our measure of "nativism" is directed exclusively at black Americans.

Last of all, and a final surprise, the impact of racial resentment is also detectable in the domain of foreign relations. As the bottom row of table 5.6 reveals, racially resentful whites seem to be generally more apprehensive over foreign threats: more inclined to favor increases in defense spending, more likely to advocate a tough posture toward the Soviet Union, and more likely to support U.S. involvement in Central America. The effects are not gigantic, but they are far from zero. They suggest, once again, that resentment toward blacks is part of a broader system of beliefs and feelings about social difference in general.[71]

Conclusions

The origins of race prejudice in America are tangled and distant. They recede far into our shared past, rooted most plainly in the experience of slavery. Closer to our own time, the public form and private meaning of prejudice have undergone two important alterations, one reflected in the decline of the doctrine of biological racism, the other provoked by the sweeping changes and turbulent events that made up the racial crisis of the 1960s. As a consequence of these developments, animosity toward blacks is expressed today less in the language of inherent, permanent, biological difference, and more in the language of American individualism, which depicts blacks as unwilling to try and too willing to take what they have not earned.

Defined this way, racial resentment plays an important and expansive role in white public opinion. On equal opportunity in employment, school desegregation, federal assistance, affirmative action at work, and quotas in college admissions, racially resentful whites line up on one side of the issue, and racially sympathetic whites line up on the other. Racial resentment is not the *only* thing that matters for race policy, but *by a fair margin racial resentment is the most important*. This result comes shining through, across various specifications, under different political circumstances, and with close attention to alternative considerations.[72]

Such results would be enough to establish the political significance of racial resentment in contemporary American society, but we found more. We found that racially resentful whites also tend to push for a strong national defense and a tough stance toward the Soviet Union (back when there was a Soviet Union), to favor limits on foreign imports to save American jobs, and to oppose sanctions against South Africa. On the home front, racially resentful whites oppose

legislation that would protect gays from employment discrimination and are comparatively unenthusiastic about federal efforts to cope with the AIDS epidemic. They favor the death penalty. They tend to oppose increases in federal money for Food Stamps. They would like to see government services denied to immigrants.

We should hasten to say that not everyone who resents blacks fears homosexuals, and not everyone who supports a strong defense believes that blacks have gotten ahead unfairly. We have uncovered tendencies and inclinations, that is all. Still, the tendencies and inclinations are surprisingly strong, and most especially, they reach surprisingly far. We began with resentment toward blacks in particular, but here we are at the end with something rather different—with, evidently, apprehensions and fears set off by a variety of social differences.

In this way, our findings recall those reported by Adorno and his colleagues nearly fifty years ago in *The Authoritarian Personality*. Adorno's team found that the fear and contempt that some Americans felt for Jews were often accompanied by comparable sentiments directed at other "alien elements": criminals, Japanese-Americans, conscientious objectors, immigrants, blacks, foreign ideas, and more. Our results suggest a similar ethnocentric pattern to American opinion today. The resemblances between our conception of racial resentment and the point of view put forward in *The Authoritarian Personality* are sufficiently striking, and the differences sufficiently important, to warrant further discussion. We will return to the relationships between racial resentment, prejudice, and ethnocentrism in our final chapter.

For now we want to emphasize the contrast between our results, which reveal racial resentment to be the most potent force in white public opinion on race today, and most contemporary scholarship on white racial attitudes, which tends to be impressed by the transformation in race relations that has taken place in the United States in the latter half of the twentieth century and optimistic about the future. In much of this work, America is portrayed as moving inexorably toward a racially integrated and egalitarian society. There are authoritative references to "revolutionary changes in ancient beliefs about Negroes,"[73] and to the "steady, massive growth in racial tolerance."[74] There is the confident inference that "white Americans have shown in many ways that they do not want a racist government and that they will not follow racist leaders."[75] The most recent report from the General Social Survey's monitoring of white racial attitudes begins with the characteristically sunny announcement that "despite widespread and vocal concerns about a resurgence of racism and the decline of support for civil rights during the 1980s, public support for racial equality continued to grow throughout the decade and, in 1990, support on many measures was at or near all time highs."[76]

Not to worry is the main message here. Prejudice is a problem, but a small and shrinking one; more impressive is the massive improvement in white attitudes. Reynolds Farley, in the conclusion to his superior review of the evidence on differences between blacks and whites in economic and social standing, expresses this point of view superbly:

> Whites have confronted the American dilemma described by Gunnar Myrdal and have accepted the principles that all should be allowed to vote and that blacks and whites should have equal opportunities for jobs and education. To be sure, racism is not dead. A small number of whites are still active in the Ku Klux Klan, crosses are still burned on the lawns of some blacks who dare to move into white neighborhoods, and proposals to build low-income housing or to integrate public schools still meet heated opposition. But no more than a small minority of whites would prefer to overturn the civil rights laws of the 1960s and go back to a legally segregated society.[77]

This is not so much wrong as it is incomplete. Real progress *has* taken place. As a rule, white Americans now reject the idea that blacks originate from an inferior race, and they accept equal opportunity and racial integration as matters of principle. These are genuine accomplishments—but there is more to be said, and more to worry over.

For one thing, we see no reason why biological racism might not return. In a scathing commentary on *A Common Destiny*, the National Academy of Sciences report on the condition of black Americans and the state of race relations today, the Harvard psychologist R. J. Herrnstein complained of the report's unwillingness to confront the possibility that racial differences in socioeconomic achievement or intellectual performance might be due to "differing average endowments of people in the two races."[78] Herrnstein argued that restrictions on public discourse and scientific investigation on matters of racial difference are both pervasive and powerful. In Herrnstein's view, to mention genetic explanations is "taboo in polite company"; "open discussion of the [genetic] model is our obscenity, much as public discussion of sexuality was the Victorian obscenity."[79]

Herrnstein has a point, even if he carries it too far. Liberal environmentalism did take over the social sciences, and no doubt did discourage the consideration of biological explanations for racial differences. But liberal environmentalism now seems to be in retreat. Biological and evolutionary models have made a considerable splash in recent years throughout the social sciences. Carl Degler argues that this revival of biological thought is politically innocent—and much

of it appears to be.[80] Certainly it differs conspicuously from the flagrant racism of late nineteenth-century Social Darwinism. But Degler's thick and learned volume devotes only a dismissive footnote to the work of Arthur Jensen, the well-known Berkeley educational psychologist who has argued that racial differences in performance on intelligence tests should be understood in genetic terms.

And Degler's book was published too soon to take account of the ostentatious arrival of *The Bell Curve*, in which Herrnstein and Charles Murray imply, again and again, that racial differences in achievement and social standing are biologically based; and that in the face of this genetic imperative, social reform and government intervention are powerless.[81] *Newsweek* called *The Bell Curve* "frightening stuff," which it is, and worried that it "plays to public anxieties over crime, illegitimacy, welfare dependence, and racial friction," which it does. At the *National Review*, meanwhile, contributors to a symposium welcomed it as "magisterial," noting that it "confirms ordinary citizens' reasonable intuition that trying to engineer racial equality in the distribution of occupations and social positions runs against not racist prejudice but nature, which shows no such egalitarian distribution of talents." It is simply too early to tell whether or not Jensen and then Herrnstein and Murray represent the leading edge of what will turn into an outpouring of research, once again altering the mix of ideas about race circulating through American society. We may not have seen the last of biological racism.

Even if we have seen the last of biological racism, we surely have not seen the last of racial resentment. It may be comforting to equate prejudice with the doctrine of white supremacy and to imagine racists parading around in white sheets. Defined this way, prejudice is now confined primarily to the backwaters of white society and very well may be on the way out altogether. But the decline of blatant racial bigotry should not be equated with the disappearance of racial resentment. There is still plenty of that around, expressed in assumptions about black character. Informed by the individualistic virtues of hard work and self-reliance, racial resentment remains a very popular and exceedingly potent force in white opinion. More than 130 years after emancipation, on the eve of a new century, views on politics and society are still powerfully shaped by the black image in the white mind.